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Samantha Nordstrom  
*Western Oregon University*

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Bittersweet Independence:  
The Influence of the United States on Cuba's Independence

By

Samantha Nordstrom

Senior Seminar: HST 499  
Professor John L. Rector  
Western Oregon University  
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Readers  
Professor John L. Rector  
Professor Kimberly Jensen

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## Bittersweet Independence

To sever ties with an overbearing mother country has been the dream of colonies since the United States successfully rebelled against Great Britain in 1776. When Cuba repeatedly sought independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, why shouldn't the United States help it to achieve the same goal? After the explosion of the U.S.S. Maine in the Havana Harbor in 1898 the United States decided to help by liberating the island from Spain. Then it assisted in establishing a republican government. But after that why did the United States maintain Cuba under its control? In the post independence period the U.S. began to rebuild the Cuban economy and political structure. U.S. investors became a direct part of Cuba's economy and in many aspects of it. This created an economic system dependent on sugar and foreign investors. The powerful Cuban elite, however, also benefited by U.S. investment. The U.S. directly controlled Cuba's economics, politics, and society even after independence.

Whether the United States influence on the island was positive or negative is notably debated by politicians and scholars. One interpretation views the United States as a friend of the island that got involved because it was the right thing to do, while another sees the United States as imperialistic and reaping the benefits Cuba had to offer. Interpretations and approaches vary from source to source when considering the influence the United States had on Cuba during its independence from Spain, and then its independence from the United States.

Russell Fitzgibbon's book *Cuba and the United States 1900-1935*,<sup>1</sup> written in 1935 illustrates how the United States assisted Cuba in its time of need. To describe the Cuban-United States relationship he uses Quincy Adams's metaphor of an apple falling from its "native tree" stating that: "Cuba forcibly disjoined from its own unnatural connection with Spain and incapable of self-support, can gravitate toward the North American Union, which, by the same law of nature, cannot cast her off from its bosom".<sup>2</sup> This view explains U.S. intervention in the 1898 Cuban revolution. Fitzgibbon approves of United States control by trying to show that the United States positively assisted Cuba in independence. While the shifting policy in the end may have affected the U.S. relationship with the island, as well as the rest of Latin America, according to Fitzgibbon, without the United States Cuba could still be oppressed by the Spanish Crown.

A contrasting interpretation, written in 1972, is Luis E. Aguilar's *Cuba 1933: Prologue to Revolution*.<sup>3</sup> It reveals two important sides of American investment: first the large exportation of sugar to the U.S. and second, the problem of most plantation ownership being American. His interpretation seems to be that while Cubans had "initial enthusiasm"<sup>4</sup> for the United States involvement in the Spanish-American War, the people quickly became frightened of the new relationship with the North. Under its tutelage still their island was not completely theirs. Aguilar's interpretation shows his bias. His family was from Cuba and thus this issue was personal to his family's history. He believes that the "oversimplification" and "ignorance" about Cuba after the Spanish-American War and prior to Castro leads to the misunderstanding of present Cuba. So, he voices different

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<sup>1</sup> Russell H. Fitzgibbon, *Cuba and the United States, 1900-1935*. New York: Russell & Russell Inc. 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Fitzgibbon, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Luis E. Aguilar, *Cuba 1933: Prologue to Revolution*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1972.

<sup>4</sup> Aguilar, 15.

views of the Cuban people as the key in understanding and correcting “historical perspectives on Cuba.”<sup>5</sup> In short he disapproves of the island’s continual control by the United States.

James H. Hitchman’s “Unfinished Business: Public Works in Cuba, 1898-1902”<sup>6</sup> written in 1975, focuses much of his work on the “rebuilding” of Cuba, and the relationship that was created with the U.S. In doing so, he enumerates the works such as the building of hospitals, asylums, public parks and charitable works for the ill.<sup>7</sup> Hitchman’s very pro-American approach shows how the United States assistance to Cuba in its rebuilding “raised hope individually and collectively.”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, he believes that the Americans were trying to help build a better nation that was not one of their own. To support his interpretation he extols the works of the United States while downplaying the reaction of nationalistic Cubans.

Juan C. Santamarina’s 2000 article “The Cuban Company and the Expansion of American Business in Cuba, 1898-1915”<sup>9</sup> focused on a U.S. sugar and railroad company. This was a part of the United States’ expanding economy and was incorporated to help develop Cuba. Santamarina addresses how this company created networks between American and Cuban businessmen. His focus was specifically on the United States economic influence on Cuba. In addition, with other U.S. investments, he credits the Cuban Company for developing businesses and the new technology in transportation and communication on the island and the flourishing economy. His interpretation is that much

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<sup>5</sup> Aguilar, ix.

<sup>6</sup> James H. Hitchman, “Unfinished Business: Public Works in Cuba, 1898-1902,” *The Americans*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Jan., 1975), 335-359.

<sup>7</sup> Hitchman, 357.

<sup>8</sup> Hitchman, 359.

<sup>9</sup> Juan C. Santamarina, “The Cuba Company and the Expansion of American Business in Cuba, 1898-1915,” *The Business History Review*, Vol. 72, No. 1 (Spring, 2000), 41-83.

of the economy's success was due to Americans and gave little credit to the native Cubans themselves. Santamarina is pro-American and maybe even more pro-business. His article was published in *The Businesses History Review*, so his stance and interpretation of the United States influence on Cuba is not surprising.

No one questions that the United States influenced Cuban independence, but what caused that influence to last so long? Was it the United States interest in expanding the economy? Or was it native Cubans liked the U.S. investment and feared the consequences of its loss?

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century called the Progressive Era, the United States acted on the ideas of Manifest Destiny and Imperialism. So while the U.S. fought Spain to support the independence of Cuba it also initiated campaigns to annex Puerto Rico and the Philippines. In the Treaty of Paris, that was signed December 1898, Spain agreed to recognize Cuban independence and to cede the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam to the United States. In return, the U.S. paid Spain twenty million dollars.<sup>10</sup> Even the name of the conflict became Americanized. Though Cubans started their struggle in 1895, the conflict “was subsumed under the new descriptor, ‘Spanish-American War,’ a name that erased Cuban leadership and involvement.”<sup>11</sup> This new label made it easier for the U.S. to take control of this “independent” nation.

Technically, Cuba became an independent country after the Spanish-American War unlike Puerto Rico, the Philippine Islands and Guam which remained U.S. territories. The United States did not officially annex Cuba because the whole purpose of

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<sup>10</sup> A Treaty of Peace Between the United States and Spain, U.S. Congress, 55th Cong., 3d sess., Senate Doc. No. 62, Part 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899), 5-11.

<sup>11</sup> Rebekah E. Pite, “The Force of Food: Life on the Atkins Family Sugar Plantation in Cienfuegos, Cuba, 1884-1900,” *The Massachusetts Historical Review*, Vol. 5, (2003), 79.

the conflict was to help it gain its independence, not make it another colony. In the U.S. occupation of Cuba, General John R. Brooke, the first military governor, made a “moderate attempt to coordinate U.S. and Cuban customs.”<sup>12</sup> Instead of bringing about a completely new government, “the U.S. military authorities modified each existing [Spanish] law as the need arose.”<sup>13</sup> Brooke tried to make the transformation easier on the island. While Cubans did not favor U.S. occupation, “it was known that eventually the North Americans planned to leave.”<sup>14</sup> Although Cuba was never annexed, there were many American officers that believed it was just a matter of time before the Cubans requested annexation.

The second military governor of Cuba assigned by President McKinley, General Leonard Wood, “believed that after a brief period of independence, which would satisfy the sentiment for theoretical liberty, the Cubans would voluntarily ask to be admitted to the Union...annexation by acclamation.”<sup>15</sup> General Wood even wrote to President McKinley: “I am giving the Cubans every chance to show what is in them, in order that they may either demonstrate their fitness or their unfitness for government.”<sup>16</sup> This put the United States in a parental role. The U.S. was guiding and watching over Cuba in its steps toward a republican government, but when the island acted in a threatening way consequence of military occupation was the punishment.

While some Americans predicted annexation throughout the nation’s interventions and involvement, others like President McKinley, viewed United States occupation as a way “to get the people ready for a Republican form of government...to

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<sup>12</sup> Hugh Thomas, *Cuba The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971), 439.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas, 437.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas, 438.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas, 440.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas, 443.

give them a good school system, try to straighten out their courts, [and to] put them on their feet” as soon as possible. Furthermore, President McKinley stated, “We want to do all we can for them and to get out of the island as soon as we safely can.”<sup>17</sup> This statement shows that during the United States occupation of Cuba, Americans were uncertain of their goals.

With the island’s economy and infrastructure after the war completely exhausted, the U.S. government made important decisions and programs dealing with sanitation, hunger, the people’s morale and economic conditions in 1900. The solution to these problems set the stage for the United States economic influence and control of the island. Sanitation problems in Cuba consisted of “diseases, especially yellow fever...malarial fevers...and hookworms;”<sup>18</sup> those being the more serious that the United States helped clear up.

From the war Cuba had lost many of its agricultural resources as well as cattle and livestock. Reports on the postwar condition of the island affirmed a “large number of destitute Cubans across the country and confirmed that every day many died from hunger.”<sup>19</sup> The United States occupying military government needed to provide the starving people of Cuba with at least “four to six weeks of food as the country has no more resources which to draw on.”<sup>20</sup> It was estimated that “one-seventh” of the population of Santa Clara had died of “wounds, sickness and starvation during the war and its immediate aftermath.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas, 443.

<sup>18</sup> Fitzgibbon, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Pite, 79.

<sup>20</sup> Pite, 80.

<sup>21</sup> Pite, 80.



In reaction to the starvation the United States did provide Cuba with many food resources. As a result the Cubans were compelled to recognize the foreign occupation as legitimate. Moreover, with the United States control of food, the island and the Cuban nationalists were at the mercy of their provider. General Wood even told a New York newspaper that “no Cuban bearing arms should have food or work”.<sup>22</sup> This statement represents the late nineteenth century perspective of Americans toward the island. It gives the impression that Cubans are only putting down their weapons due to starvation and the United States intentions are simply to feed and rebuild.

War and starvation not only took a toll on the Cuban population physically, but mentally as well. In 1898, Cubans were excited by their prospect of new independence from Spain, nevertheless, when the war ended they realized that they just shifted from being under one country to being under another. With no food, a depressed economy and really no country of their own, even after achieving the title “independent,” the morale of Cuban residents was low. The increasing amount of American investors in 1905-1925 really began to control the island’s economy, and as a result it affected Cuba’s psychological state.<sup>23</sup> During the United States’ occupation and intervention “even a pretense of faith of self-government”<sup>24</sup> had been destroyed in the minds of Cubans. In addition, the new republican government that was established, by assistance from the U.S. was corrupt and failing; thus making the psychological state and morale of the island a negative one.

As noted above the Cubans’ collective mentality was that of defeat and hopelessness. This mentality as a whole made the island even more vulnerable to new

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<sup>22</sup> Pite, 81.

<sup>23</sup> Aguilar, 33.

<sup>24</sup> Aguilar, 28.

foreign systems than it might not have been if the nation's morale would have been higher. The new system being installed by the United States was very different from Spanish rule and drastic change occurred due to the collective depressed psychological state of Cubans.

To stimulate the economy, the U.S. and General Wood, started harbor projects, road building, clean water supply projects, while uniting the telegraph, cable, and telephone with the postal service.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the increase of railroad development stimulated the economy as well.

The United States congressional legislation, especially the Teller Amendment in 1898 and the Foraker Law of 1899 influenced the way that the United States treated Cuba. The Teller Amendment stated that the United States would not and did not have the intention of annexing Cuba. Attempting to limit American investment, this law was put in place so that the United States did not seem or look imperialistic. The Foraker Law thus complicated the increase of railroad development that was occurring on the island.<sup>26</sup>

This amendment was sponsored by Senator J. B. Foraker of Ohio and was “attached to the army appropriation act of March 3, 1899, as a result of the senator’s fear”<sup>27</sup> of concessions and franchises that would jeopardize the plan of the U.S. withdrawal. The amendment “prohibited in sweeping terms the granting of any property, franchises, or concessions of any kind” during the United States occupation of Cuba.<sup>28</sup> In short, it was meant to help prevent American businesses from getting privileged admission to Cuba’s economic assets. Unfortunately for Cubans this measure did not

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<sup>25</sup> Fitzgibbon, 51-53.

<sup>26</sup> Fitzgibbon, 55.

<sup>27</sup> Fitzgibbon, 55.

<sup>28</sup> Fitzgibbon, 55.

achieve its objective and as the sugar production and commerce started to increase so did other American investments.

During the early intervention and military occupation of Cuba, the United States Army Engineers and civilian Department of Public Works helped rebuild the island. Many native Cubans were excited because it “supported the political, legal and educational measures taken to prepare the island for nationhood.”<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the assistance “raised hope individually and collectively”<sup>30</sup> of Cubans. Even with this being the case, trust in the U.S. started to waver when measures such as the Platt Amendment were approved. Previously, to keep peace and control the U.S. Congress passed the Foraker Law, which the Platt Amendment seemed to discredit.

The Platt Amendment of 1901, which was authored by Senator Orville Hitchcock of Connecticut. He pointed out that the “general outline of the Cuban constitution...did not define the future relations of the two republics.”<sup>31</sup> As a result the Platt Amendment defined those terms. The most drastic and important clause was the third:

The Government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty, and for discharging the obligations with respect to Cuba imposed by the Treaty of Paris on the United States, now to be assumed and undertaken by the Government of Cuba...<sup>32</sup>

Simply it authorized the United States to “intervene for the maintenance of a Cuban government capable of protecting life, property, and liberty...defining a right of forcible

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<sup>29</sup> Hitchman, 337.

<sup>30</sup> Hitchman, 359.

<sup>31</sup> Fitzgibbon, 77-78.

<sup>32</sup> “Document: Theodore Roosevelt, the Big Stick, and the Panama Canal, ‘The Platt Amendment, 1903’,” In *Major Problems in American Foreign Policy Volume I: To 1914*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., edited by Thomas G. Paterson, Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1989, 455-466.

intervention.”<sup>33</sup> With this amendment the new government on the island was established with much American policy influence and became an American protectorate.<sup>34</sup>

The United States government did not see contradiction between its control of the island and Cuba’s emergence as an independent nation, because U.S. leaders “saw economic, moral, and political responsibilities all going hand in hand.”<sup>35</sup> Although, Cuba was encouraged to “choose a constitutional convention”<sup>36</sup> and did so in 1901, at that same time the United States forced the Platt Amendment to be added. This resulted in continual loss of Cuban control. Since the United States rejected annexation it learned “how to control Cuba without annexation.”<sup>37</sup> The way to do that was to make it almost a “mini-America” or at least try by taking advantage of the island.

Not all Cubans were against this. It was not unusual for the Cuban elite to favor annexation. Most of them believed that annexation was for the best and “saw little advantage, and certainly no future, for an independent Cuba.”<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, many elite Cuban’s thought that if the United States did not take control, that the lower class would break up the large plantations and redistribute them to the landless. Cuba’s first elected president, Tomas Estrada Palma, 1902-1906, was among these elite who shared this opinion.<sup>39</sup>

The Cuban government was influenced greatly by Palma’s views and openness to annexation. Only a small percentage of Cubans were of the elite class and the rest of

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<sup>33</sup> Fitzgibbon, 58.

<sup>34</sup> Fitzgibbon, 89.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith, *Modern Latin America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, 258.

<sup>36</sup> Skidmore, 258.

<sup>37</sup> Carmen Diana Deere, “Here Come the Yankees! The Rise and Decline of the United States Colonies in Cuba, 1898-1930,” *The Hispanic American Review*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (Nov., 1998), 764.

<sup>38</sup> Skidmore, 258.

<sup>39</sup> Skidmore, 258.

Cubans, if not hesitant about the United States involvement, were against the foreign control. Cuban nationalists were enraged with the elite for “their willingness to embrace the Yankee encroachment.”<sup>40</sup> The Cuban national congress “embarked upon democracy with a scandal fit to discredit it.”<sup>41</sup> It passed a bill giving “lavish salaries to public office holders,” gave “extra payments to the army of liberation” and approved other bills that benefited congressmen.<sup>42</sup> Palma was victorious in the 1904 election; however in a second election he won it by fraud.

The defeated Liberals revolted, which provoked a second U.S. occupation of Cuba, 1906-1909. U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt, 1901-1909, delivered a message to Congress clearly stating his views towards the United States intervention into other countries, in the Roosevelt Corollary, 1904, extending the Monroe Doctrine. The Corollary explained all that the United States desired was to “see the neighboring countries stable, orderly, and prosperous.”<sup>43</sup> Furthermore to make that desire reality, if there was any “chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence” which resulted in “a general loosening of the ties of civilized society” within a country, it may “require intervention by some civilized nation”.<sup>44</sup> In the Western Hemisphere the United States was that civilized nation, and in “flagrant cases of such wrongdoing” it would exercise an “international police power”.<sup>45</sup> Roosevelt used the Corollary to justify the continuing intervention of the U.S. into Cuba.

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<sup>40</sup> Skidmore, 258.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas, 471.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas, 471.

<sup>43</sup> “Document: Theodore Roosevelt, the Big Stick, and the Panama Canal, ‘The Roosevelt Corollary’.” In *Major Problems in American Foreign Policy Volume I: To 1914*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., edited by Thomas G. Paterson. Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1989. 461.

<sup>44</sup> “The Roosevelt Corollary,” 461.

<sup>45</sup> “The Roosevelt Corollary,” 461.

In 1906, Roosevelt then appointed an interim president, Charles Magoon, in Cuba. However, not all Cubans appreciated the interim president. In 1907 colored Cubans or Afro-Cubans of the lower class “began to organize politically.”<sup>46</sup> With discontent of their treatment since the new republic, Afro-Cubans started to give up on the existing political structures and outside the established political party system created their own party, Agrupacion Independiente de Color.<sup>47</sup> The Agrupacion, later known as the *independientes*, focused on the issues of racism and discrimination within the political system. These issues limited their participation in the society and the republic that they had helped to establish. In addition, they advocated the improvement of working conditions, as well as free university education. Unfortunately for the Agrupacion the election results still ended poorly. However, even though the group failed to win the elections, it became a threat.<sup>48</sup>

Magoon, who in 1908 oversaw the new election, also was attempting to clear up Cuba’s corrupt politics.<sup>49</sup> That same year Magoon handed the reins to the Liberal Party leader Jose Miguel Gomez. Since the *independientes* had become a threat, especially to the ruling Liberal Party, Gomez needed to weaken them. “In 1911, the government enacted the Morua Law, prohibiting the organization of political parties along racial lines.”<sup>50</sup> With more measures passed that harassed party leaders, the party broke apart. Then in 1912 came an armed rebellion. “The government acted swiftly and ruthlessly...and when it was over thousands of Afro-Cubans had been slain.”<sup>51</sup> The

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<sup>46</sup> Louis A. Perez, Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

<sup>47</sup> Perez, 221.

<sup>48</sup> Perez, 221.

<sup>49</sup> Skidmore, 258.

<sup>50</sup> Perez, 222.

<sup>51</sup> Perez, 222.

rebellion revealed that not all Cubans were excited or satisfied with the new republic and the United States influence. Furthermore, it underscored the reality that “rebellion was the inevitable recourse of a population unable to find sufficient opportunity as field hands or factory workers or functionaries in public administration.”<sup>52</sup>

While not all Cubans wanted to be annexed by the United States, not all Americans were in favor of it either. Some opponents of annexation were linked to the sugar cane versus sugar beets issue.<sup>53</sup> The sugar beet growers in the West did not want to be put out of business by Cuba’s more affordable cane sugar. Cuba also threatened the sugar cane profit of farmers in Louisiana and Florida. Not only did the United States take over “major ownership of plantations and mills, the U.S. became by far the largest customer for Cuba’s sugar exports—usually purchasing 75 or 80 percent of the total.”<sup>54</sup> The result was that sugar growers in the U.S. feared Cuban competition would lower profits.

So with the economy of Cuba being very impoverished after the war, the investment of the United States helped to create a sugar boom. Prior to the war the ownership and power of cane sugar was in the hands of independent growers, as well as some U.S. investors. However, with the United States’ influence over technology and railways there was a “rapid reduction in the number of sugar mills” but an increase in the number of huge foreign “sugar estates”<sup>55</sup> also known as *centrales*. Many independent farms were sold out to the big sugar companies and by “1912 the latter controlled more

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<sup>52</sup> Perez, 222.

<sup>53</sup> Deere, 733.

<sup>54</sup> Skidmore, 262.

<sup>55</sup> Skidmore, 259.

than ten percent of all land in Cuba.”<sup>56</sup> The small sugar mills could not afford to mill their own sugar anymore. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Cuba had “emerged as one of the world’s most efficient sugar producers”<sup>57</sup> by increasing its output of the product.

The *centrales* and the foreign investment had “revolutionary consequences on society and the standard of living.”<sup>58</sup> Since the big *centrales* were established in low populated and fairly rural areas, they “fomented new towns...creating work and to some extent centres of culture and education.”<sup>59</sup> Not only did these huge foreign sugar estates and *centrales* allow for a higher standard of living around these estates but they created and reinforced Cuba’s dependency on sugar and foreign investors.

Cuba’s sugar economy was booming. The only problem was that most of all the arable land was used to plant cane sugar. With the new technology of sugar production transformed the labor market. Sugar cane only needs to be replanted “periodically, at intervals of five to twenty-five years”<sup>60</sup> and during cultivation a large workforce becomes extremely necessary. The real demand for labor arrives when harvesting the cane, a “three-month period of intense activity, mostly spent on the arduous cutting of cane with machetes.”<sup>61</sup> Employment rates boom during those three months for the lower class. The real problem comes after harvest when widespread unemployment occurs.

Most of the island was cane plantations and very few individual workers had land of their own to cultivate. As a way of not losing their workers, the owners and managers (Cuban elite and U.S. investors), would let their workers go into debt so that they would

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<sup>56</sup> Skidmore, 259.

<sup>57</sup> Skidmore, 259.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas, 542.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas, 542.

<sup>60</sup> Skidmore, 259.

<sup>61</sup> Skidmore, 260.



“remain under obligation to the ownership.”<sup>62</sup> This system seems cruel and it kept the powerful powerful. Workers were not farmers, they were laborers and “were concerned more about wages and working conditions than the acquisition of land.”<sup>63</sup> United States investors control over cane-sugar was not the only foreign economic domination; they controlled railroads as well. Furthermore they also encouraged immigration to the island.

Cubans were not the only people to make up the island’s work force. “Spaniards came to Cuba escaping from their own invertebrate social structure, bringing besides their skills various convictions about the power of organized labour.”<sup>64</sup> Between 1902 and 1910 “almost 200,000 Spaniards emigrated to Cuba.”<sup>65</sup> In addition, other immigrants came from Haiti and Jamaica. They were recruited as cheap labor and attracted to work in the *centrales*. While there was much American investment, there was surprisingly little American immigration to the island.

United States economic interests encouraged immigration to Cuba, to promote railroads, sugar, and banana plantations. The Platt Amendment and the Reciprocity Treaty of 1903 “favored Cuban exports with a special 20 percent reduction in United States tariffs.”<sup>66</sup> While the Reciprocity Treaty benefited Cuba, many Cuban planters felt that this treaty “offered too little too late” because “by the time the treaty was signed, many Cuban landowners were already bankrupt”.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, those bankruptcies lead to even more foreign control. With most of the sugar economy in the United States hands

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<sup>62</sup> Skidmore, 260.

<sup>63</sup> Skidmore, 260.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas, 541.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas, 497.

<sup>66</sup> Deere, 737.

<sup>67</sup> Deere, 738.

or the Cuban elite, the building of railroads not only changed transportation in Cuba but was another means to make money.

One of the most powerful U.S. corporations to invest in the island was the Cuba Company. It was incorporated in New Jersey, in 1900, by some of the wealthiest men in America, “in order to ‘develop Cuba’ through the construction of a central railroad line traversing the island.”<sup>68</sup> Due to the railroad line that ran to the east of Cuba, more companies and investors became interested in sugar and tobacco production, as well as tourism.<sup>69</sup> The Cuba Company believed that Cubans “had little money to invest and that Americans, as individuals or in the form of corporations, were the most attractive potential investors.”<sup>70</sup> So with the Cuba Company’s railroads, control of sugar production and transportation became much faster.

With the Cuba Company promoting the “cultivation of sugar cane” by 1909, the production of sugar in its two mills, Jatibonico and Jobabo, reached “900,000 bags (148,500 tons) of sugar per year.”<sup>71</sup> With Cuban workers, the company developed record profits due to the building of high-production mills. These new mills, with “large-scale sugar production facilitated by the new railroads in eastern Cuba”<sup>72</sup> became extremely profitable. Moreover in the 1910s “fifty-six of the largest and most efficient mills in Cuba were built along the lines of the Cuba Company railroad.”<sup>73</sup> Also, “nearly three million tons and 40 percent of total world sugar production” was coming from eastern Cuba.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Santamarina, 41.

<sup>69</sup> Santamarina, 62.

<sup>70</sup> Santamarina, 66-68.

<sup>71</sup> Santamarina, 65.

<sup>72</sup> Santamarina, 65.

<sup>73</sup> Santamarina, 66.

<sup>74</sup> Santamarina, 73.

With Americans controlling most of the agriculture as well as transportation, their grip on the island's economy tightened.

To make Cuba even more profitable, American investors believed that new investors needed to be “lured to travel in eastern Cuba.”<sup>75</sup> United States newspapers and media also contributed to the influence in putting money into Cuba. Newspapers were promoting investment into the island, Many did; not only because of low land prices but because they expected to make money easily.<sup>76</sup>

The advertising of Cuba in the United States also led to tourism in eastern Cuba. The Cuba Company built restaurants and “three hotels” and as every steamer arrived in Cuba people were given “pamphlets and brochures advertising the company's railroad service and hotels.”<sup>77</sup> So by the 1910s the United States was deeply involved and connected to Cuba with money pouring into American and Cuban elite pockets.

With control of the economy, the United States also controlled politics and society. Yet, without the Cuban elites' support the American investors would have not been as successful or profitable. Since the island was so destroyed after the war it was not uncommon for the Cuban elites to work closely with North American entrepreneurs. “Cuban businessmen, lawyers, and politicians” were all within the elite and with U.S. capital and investment being the “only source of income and economic growth” within the island the relationship and support was not surprising.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, “American investments provided jobs, status, income, and wealth,” and created “partners to Cuban

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<sup>75</sup> Santamarina, 68.

<sup>76</sup> Deere, 738.

<sup>77</sup> Santamarina, 68.

<sup>78</sup> Santamarina, 78.

elite for reinvestment in industry, especially sugar.”<sup>79</sup> Elite Cubans and American both profited from this relationship.

Native Cuban laborers, however, did not profit in the same way. The majority of native Cubans were of the work force. In the Cuba Company the “executive management...was completely North American.”<sup>80</sup> But, while the North Americans who were the executive management had the most power, they also understood the benefits of Cuban laborers being managed by Cubans. W. J. Harahan, an U.S. railroad executive even wrote that:

Cuban labor is by no means as efficient as labor in the United States. For this reason, a Cuban railroad requires a greater amount of supervision than is true in the United States... There is one thing that I recommend, and that is that as much native Cuban supervision be employed as is practicable. I believe that if a connection can be formed by this means between the higher officer and labor that a closer relationship can be had as between the men and the officers; which will mean a much greater saving to the Company...<sup>81</sup>

Harahan’s statement reveals that while the Cuban elite may have been profiting and getting along with U.S. investors, the working class was in a very different situation. He also recognized the benefits of Cuban workers being supervised by their own and not outsiders. This revealed the importance of understanding the locals and their culture when it came to controlling them.

With the sugar economy of Cuba being so tightly intertwined and controlled by U.S. investors, the value of sugar stock was determined by the “health or ill will of the New York Stock Exchange.”<sup>82</sup> Also, by 1912 the Reciprocity Treaty with the United States had worked and “Cuban sugar had driven out all European, West Indian or other

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<sup>79</sup> Santamarina, 78.

<sup>80</sup> Santamarina, 80.

<sup>81</sup> Santamarina, 80-81.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas, 536.

unfavoured sugar from the U.S. market.”<sup>83</sup> In 1914 at the start of World War I, the United States control and influence over Cuba encouraged the island to associate itself with the U.S. and the Allies. In Europe sugar beets were being destroyed, and the “Allies therefore became increasingly dependent on Cuban sugar while the central powers starved.”<sup>84</sup> This benefited Cuba; England “took 450,000 tons of sugar from Cuba in 1914-1915 and 550,000, 780,000 and 883,000 tons in the succeeding years.”<sup>85</sup>

At the beginning of World War I, Cuba was even more dominated by the United States influence and control. The sugar economy was booming and money was flowing into the island as well as to American investors. This economy, reliant on foreign investment can be attributed to the United States intervention in Cuba’s independence struggle. Before the United States intervened, Nationalist Cubans dreamed of their island as a truly independent nation in which they could call their own. They believed that once they freed themselves from the Spanish Crown that they would at last have their own state. But even when Cuba had the title of “independent” it was not free from external influences because in reality the United States intervention was necessary. The different social levels within Cuba at the end of the war also made it easier for U.S. control.

It seemed ironic that once “independent” Cuban elites were very pro-American. With the anxiety of losing their wealth and power, that they obtained throughout the war, there was a fear of a lower class uprising.<sup>86</sup> For if the United States had not started its assistance in creating a government, with elite Cubans backing it, the lower working class of Cubans probably would have created its own government. That government may have

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<sup>83</sup> Thomas, 536.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas, 537.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas, 537.

<sup>86</sup> Perez, 222.

been even more democratic and republican than the one that was established. So class issues and differences affected the amount of U.S. control that was embraced by Cubans.

The intervention and occupation of Cuba by the United States government and military molded and controlled the island in a way that become beneficial and profitable to itself. This was possible because of the desperate and exhausted state of the island after years of fighting. As mentioned earlier, the island was full of disease from lack of sanitation, no clean water, no food, a poor economy, and death. As a result the people's psychological state and morale were low. United States intervention cleaned up disease, fed the people, built roads, schools and asylums.<sup>87</sup> These deeds were welcomed, but in the process they recognized the legitimacy of United States control.

Through this control the United States started to help Cubans create a new government and rebuild their economy. With the new republic failing, the U.S. maintained its power through forced amendments. In addition North American investors became heavily involved with Cuba's cane-sugar and with new technology, new mills and a new booming economy. With the elite Cubans and Americans profiting, the United States was not going to disconnect itself from Cuba anytime soon. Since the United States dominated the island's economy, it also controlled and influenced Cuba's society and politics.

So why did Cuba remain under the United States control even with it's independence from Spain? Through the interventions and rebuilding of Cuba the United States started its hold. Then as investors recognized Cuba's economic assets foreign investors became a direct part of Cuba's economy. This control not only created an economic system, society and politics dependent on sugar and American investment, but

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<sup>87</sup> Hitchman, 337.

created Cuba in the light of the United States. Furthermore, with the close relationship of American investors and Cuban elites, the latter welcomed the growing U.S. presence. The United States influence on Cuba even after its independence was the result of Cubans themselves not being ready to take the wheel of their nation because of the tragedies of war. But due to the U.S. domination of Cuba's economy, politics, society neither of the nations were going to let the other go. This sadly was Cuba's bittersweet independence.

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